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WASHINGTON: Four US lawmakers introduced legislation that would expand the US diplomatic presence in China, promote US exports to China and increase Chinese language training and energy cooperation between the countries.

One bill authorizes a new consulate in Wuhan, with a population of about 9 million, and 10 smaller diplomatic posts in cities with more than a million people.

Another would help US states establish export promotion offices in China, help small US businesses stage China trade missions and arrange grants for Chinese business education programs.

US critics say China keeps its currency undervalued by up to 40 percent. They say that gives Chinese exporters an unfair price advantage and widens its yawning trade gap. Last year, the US trade deficit with China reached a record \$235 billion (euro172 billion).

Other bills introduced would authorize new grants to fund US-China energy and climate change education programs and increase Chinese cultural studies and programs for U.S. students eager to study Chinese.

The lawmakers are Republican representative Mark Kirk and Democratic representaives Rick Larsen, Susan Davis and Steve Israel.